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## How does the Polish Presidency of the EU Council plan to balance its focus on seven security areas, while prioritising EU enlargement, particularly with countries like Ukraine, Montenegro, and the Republic of Moldova?

The Polish Presidency of the EU Council, which started in January 2025, aims to balance its focus on seven security areas: defence, energy, cybersecurity, food security, economic resilience, disinformation, and border protection with a strong push for EU enlargement, especially for Ukraine, Montenegro, and the Republic of Moldova. Led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, Poland sees these priorities as interconnected, and leverages its role as a link between East and West to bolster Europe's stability amid Russian threats.

For Poland, EU enlargement is part of a security strategy. For Ukraine, it implies accelerating accession talks, building on the war's urgency to open important negotiation clusters like "the fundamentals" despite Hungarian opposition. In our view, this strengthens military and border security, vital for Poland's eastern flank, while supporting Kyiv's reforms. Montenegro, further along, benefits from Poland's focus on rule of law and economic competitiveness, aiming for EU accession by 2028. Success here could serve as a model for the deeper Western Balkan integration, enhancing regional stability. **The Republic of Moldova, under Russian hybrid pressure, sees Poland stimulating it to prioritise energy diversification and disinformation countermeasures, while aligning its security goals with its membership progress, in order to increase its potential to open negotiation clusters in 2025.** Nevertheless, this dual agenda faces hurdles: EU divisions over rapid enlargement, economic concerns (e.g., Ukraine's agriculture), and post-Trump transatlantic uncertainties. Poland frames enlargement not as a distraction, but as essential to security. Therefore, in the context of its EU Council Presidency, it actively fosters the opening of negotiation chapters.

This reflects Poland's ambition to shape EU's future. By tying Ukraine, Montenegro, and the Republic of Moldova to Europe's security architecture, Poland reinforces the pivotal role of Central Europe. Success hinges on the capacity to navigate geopolitical tensions and make concrete progress, while ensuring that enlargement fortifies the EU's Eastern edge.

## Since factors such as security and enlargement seriously affect the EU's budget negotiations, how could Poland maintain the focus on the Cohesion Policy (CP) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as main areas of interest for our two countries?

In those domains, Poland's strategy hinges on the leverage of its EU Council Presidency and on its domestic political calendar. With the 2025 presidential elections, the Polish government under Donald Tusk faces pressure to deliver for regions reliant on cohesion funds, and for farmers who benefit from the CAP. This electoral context strengthens Poland's resolve to safeguard these budget lines, and oppose cuts, despite competing priorities, like Ukraine's integration or defence spending. **Warsaw sees cohesion and CAP as non-negotiable, and strives to ensure that levelling up and agricultural support remain central to EU solidarity.** It will also refrain from negotiating ATM or DCFTA until the second round of the Polish presidential election, held on June 1, 2025. New openings for budget adjustments may emerge in 2026, with the renewal of political mandates and the progress on enlargement talks.

Poland could use this window of opportunity to reinforce cohesion and CAP, aligning them with its security goals e.g., framing agricultural resilience as food security. However, the scope of this opportunity will narrow towards 2027, when general elections across Europe, including in Poland, will shift the attention to domestic election campaigns, stalling EU-level ambitions. By then, budget negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) will intensify. Therefore, Poland risks losing momentum if it does not lock in gains earlier.

**Its current EU Council Presidency should thus stand firm, using its agenda-setting power to keep cohesion and CAP at the forefront. Poland will argue that these policies actually complement and do not compete with the security and enlargement policies e.g., cohesion funds can stabilise border regions, while CAP supports rural economies against external shocks.** This reflects Poland's pragmatic approach bent on balancing national interests with the electoral calendar and EU unity.

## What role do you believe the Polish Presidency can play in strengthening the transatlantic relationship, particularly in the context of its focus on security and strategic autonomy?

Poland still views this relationship as a cornerstone of European security, given the urgent need for credible deterrence against Russia a threat Warsaw believes only the United States can fully respond to in the short term. At the same time, it is mobilising pan-EU efforts to boost up the Union's defence posture and thus meet the requirements of the future security environment in which the U.S. might be less engaged. With its strategic position on NATO's Eastern Flank and a deep-seated awareness of the Russian aggression, Poland is uniquely placed to bridge EU and U.S. interests by leveraging its influence in the NATO framework, while navigating the complexities of American politics and its evolving stance on Europe. Hence, Poland's immediate priority is to reinforce transatlantic security cooperation within NATO, where the U.S. remains the linchpin.

During its current EU Council Presidency, Poland expressed hopes for enhanced U.S. military presence in Europe more troops, equipment, and joint exercises—seeing this as the only viable deterrent against Russia for the time being. Poland's urgency stems from the ongoing war in Ukraine and Moscow's hybrid threats, which expose Europe's current limitations. Though EU's strategic autonomy is a long-term goal, Poland accepts the reality that U.S. politics potentially erratic under a post-Trump administration shapes the transatlantic dynamics. Warsaw will thus advocate for NATO as primary channel for U.S.-EU collaboration, ensuring that Europe's security is not vulnerable to American electoral shifts.

Yet, Poland is not banking solely on the U.S. support in the long run. Its EU Council Presidency already champions the development of domestic and European defence capabilities under NATO's umbrella, involving non-EU allies like the UK under the so-called Big Five format. This dual approach relying on U.S. power now, while building EU resilience illustrates Poland's slow transition from an exclusively US-reliant state for hard security to a top security provider and influencer within the EU. **Hence, Warsaw pushes for increased EU defence spending, industrial cooperation, integration of the British security partnership, and alignment with NATO's framework to avoid duplications.**

This balances immediate deterrence with a gradual shift towards European self-reliance, by reducing over-dependence on a U.S. whose commitment to European defence might waver.

The Polish Presidency will use its moral authority as a frontline state that mobilises nearly 5% of its GDP for defence a fact endorsed by Americans to rally EU support for NATO-centric cooperation, while subtly steering the Union towards open strategic autonomy. By stressing U.S. indispensability today and European potential tomorrow, Poland ensures a robust deterrence against Russia, rooted in NATO and, at the same time, forward-looking a strategy that resonates with the need to focus on security and sovereignty.

## How does the Polish Presidency plan to leverage the Three Seas Initiative Summit in April 2025 to enhance regional cooperation and infrastructure development within the EU?

**Poland will facilitate high-level political engagement and broader partnerships. The summit will welcome not only the 3SI member states, but also prospective partners like Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova (already associate participants), alongside global business leaders, fostering a wider conversation on regional connectivity.** This aligns with Poland's ambition to position the 3SI as a complementary tool to EU policies, especially during its 2025 EU Council Presidency.

Polish officials, such as Deputy Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski, view the 3SI as a means to build coalitions within the European Council, consolidate Poland's northern foreign policy dimension (e.g., the Baltic and Nordic connections), and support EU enlargement, particularly for Ukraine. Additionally, the summit will underscore security alongside economic priorities, drawing on lessons from recent geopolitical tensions, notably Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Poland will spotlight infrastructure projects that offer both economic benefits and enhanced military mobility, bolstering the region's strategic resilience.

**By hosting this summit, the Polish Presidency aims to elevate the 3SI's profile, establishing it as a vital driver of EU cohesion and transatlantic relations, while tackling regional disparities and unlocking the economic potential of Central and Eastern Europe.**

I would expect a particular emphasis on re-drafting TEN-T and other pan-European logistical plans to further include Ukraine with its investment needs into the 3Seas network, and strengthen the potential of the region to provide continuous support for Ukraine and economic resilience.

## Wojciech Przybylski

Wojciech Przybylski is leading a strategic foresight in CEE on EU democratic security. He is the Editor of Visegrad Insight at Res Publica Foundation in Warsaw, an advisory board member at LSE IDEAS Ratiu Forum, the European Forum for New Ideas (EFNI), and the International Strategy Forum (ISF) of Schmidt Futures.

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